

Meeting Summary of the SANBAG Board of Directors

San Bernardino Associated Governments ■ 1170 W. 3rd St., 2nd Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92410 ■ (909) 884-8276
www.sanbag.ca.gov

■ Board gives green light to SB Valley signal project

Hate red lights? Help is on the way with two new construction contracts that will allow work to start on the long-awaited traffic signal coordination project in the San Bernardino Valley.

Board members approved a \$1.7 million contract with Steiny & Company and a \$1.9 million contract with Republic Electric to coordinate the first two tiers of the signal project.

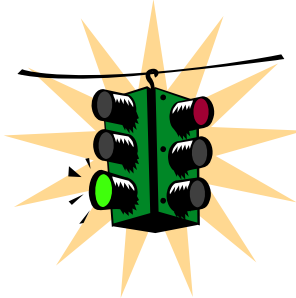
Based in Baldwin Park, Steiny & Company will build the project's first tier, which includes 299 signals on major streets that run parallel to and intersect with Interstate 10 and Route 60. Republic Electric, from Novato, will be responsible for linking 294 signals along other major streets and interchanges in the second tier of the project.

Both contracts involve installing traffic signal interconnection systems and linking signals to existing communication devices. The second tier of work also includes installing a new traffic signal and modifying some signals.

"Signal coordination projects typically result in a 12 to 15 percent reduction in travel times, less fuel consumption, less pollution and fewer rear-end accidents," explained Senior Transportation Analyst Andrea Zureick.

Planning for the project started in 1999. Federal Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality funds were secured for the first two tiers in 2000 and 2001, and engineering and environmental work started a year later.

Construction work should take about six to 12 months to complete. Two additional tiers of signals are planned for the future.



■ Measure I Strategic Plan moves forward

The Measure I Strategic Plan for 2010-2040 cleared a hurdle with the Board's acceptance of two principles that will help guide further discussion of the plan this fall.

Board members accepted project cost estimates beyond those projected in the measure approved by San Bernardino County voters in 2004. The increases are due to a combination of soaring construction material costs, reduced availability of these materials and rising gas prices, among other factors.

They also accepted a revenue projection of \$8 billion over the 30-year term, compared to the \$6 billion estimated during the development of the Measure I Expenditure Plan in 2003 and 2004.

Both the project costs and the revenue projections were discussed in detail at a Measure I workshop held May 31.

Acceptance of these principles will help the Board make decisions about other Strategic Plan issues, including the prioritization of projects, bonding or other advance financing options, the use of federal funds in conjunction with Measure I dollars, fair share contributions from new development, the responsibilities of various agencies and ways to address project cost overruns.

A second Board workshop is scheduled for this fall.

■ Kirkhoff lauded for 10 years at SANBAG



Michelle Kirkhoff, Director of Air Quality and Mobility Programs, earned kudos for her 10 years with SANBAG. Kirkhoff oversees ridesharing, call boxes, Freeway Service Patrols and other commuter assistance programs.

Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, pictured, presented Kirkhoff with a SANBAG pin to mark her time with the agency.

Down the road . . .

- Aug. 9: Administrative Committee, 9 a.m.
- Note: The Major Projects, Plans & Programs and Mountain-Desert Committees are cancelled this month.

Metrolink weekend ridership right on track

Train usage between San Bernardino, Los Angeles growing in popularity

A strong marketing effort and sky high gasoline prices have caused the number of weekend passengers on Metrolink's San Bernardino Line to climb dramatically during the past year. Train usage between San Bernardino and Los Angeles grew by double-digit figures on both Saturdays and Sundays from 2005 to 2006.

This month's *Street Smart* examines weekend train ridership, the relationship between usage and gas prices and the upcoming "Midnight Train" on



Saturdays. Public Information Officer Cheryl Donahue and Metrolink Marketing Research Manager Henning Eichler provided a report to the Board of Directors.

Weekend Usage Had Stalled; Marketing Campaign Developed

About 18 months ago, SANBAG staff noted that the number of weekend passengers on the San Bernardino Line was not growing at the same rate as weekday ridership. Monday through Friday train use was climbing steadily, but weekend figures were flat.

SANBAG and Metrolink staff developed a marketing strategy to promote the benefits of taking the train on Saturdays and Sundays. The strategy included newspaper ads, feature stories about Metrolink excursions, website banner ads and onboard seat-drops for current riders.

After six months of positive results, staff surveyed riders and determined that there were just as many riders traveling from Los Angeles to San Bernardino as there were from San Bernardino to Los Angeles. Staff also learned that most riders were using the train to visit family members and friends. With that in mind, SANBAG and Metrolink revised their marketing messages to reflect a "friends and family" theme and expanded outreach to target the Latino community as well.

Ridership Soars

During the one-year campaign, ridership increased dramatically. Overall, between July 2005 and May 2006, Saturday passengers increased by 27.6 percent and Sunday passengers increased by 20.4 percent.

In January, for example, Saturday passengers averaged 3,304, up 51 percent from January 2005. In May, new records were set. Saturday usage in May was the highest in three years: 4,222 passengers, a 38 percent increase from the 3,060 passengers the previous year. Sunday usage also climbed in May; passengers averaged 2,351 for the month, up 42 percent from May 2005.

But what about Gas Prices?

SANBAG and Metrolink staff acknowledge that the rapidly escalating gas prices since this spring certainly have been a contributing factor in Metrolink use — both on weekends and weekdays. However, Eichler, who conducts research for Metrolink's marketing division, said that gas prices alone did not cause the growth in ridership.

"We have had large gas price increases in the past, but haven't seen the type of weekend ridership growth as we are seeing now. Clearly the marketing campaign contributed to the increase in riders," he said.

Eichler also examined at what point that it is less expensive to ride Metrolink than to drive a car or sport utility vehicle. For mid-sized cars, it may be cheaper to take the train for trips longer than 13 miles. For SUV drivers, Metrolink may be a less expensive option for trips longer than seven miles. These cost savings fluctuate, based on the time of day traveled, whether a one-way or round-trip ticket is purchased, or if a monthly pass is used or if fares are subsidized by employers. Vehicle costs were calculated based on \$3.30 per gallon of gas and average vehicle maintenance fees.

Late Night Service, Saturday Nights

A late-night Metrolink train is finally here! Metrolink will start new service on the San Bernardino Line on September 8, with a "Midnight Train" departing L.A. at 11:15 p.m. and returning to San Bernardino by 12:45 a.m. In the current schedule, the last train now leaves Union Station at 8:30 p.m., so this will give riders nearly three more hours to spend time in L.A. before heading for home.

Originally scheduled to start in October, the start date for the late-night trains was moved up to accommodate the Los Angeles County Fair in Pomona, which runs from September 8 to October 1.

